

Australian educators urge support for US Volvo workers strike

Our correspondent

14 June 2021

A meeting of university workers, members of the Committee for Public Education (CFPE) in Australia, last week urged global support for the decision by 3,000 US Volvo Truck workers in the United States to oppose a second sell-out contract negotiated by the pro-corporate United Auto Workers (UAW) union and return to the picket lines.

The resolution stated: "We extend our solidarity to the Volvo workers, striking for their just demands at Volvo Truck New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia, and undertake to fight for the widest support for their struggle.

"We welcome their decision to reject the sell-out agreement proposed by the pro-company United Auto Workers union and to form a rank-and-file committee to lead the battle against the company-union partnership.

"Although we work in a different industry on the other side of the world, we face the common need for a unified working-class fightback against the employers' offensive, which is being enforced by the trade unions.

"As many as 90,000 university workers in Australia have lost their jobs since the COVID-19 disaster began, on top of a decades-long assault on wages and conditions that has now left two-thirds of university staff in insecure casual or contract employment.

"This has been possible only because the union covering us, the National Tertiary Education Union, has systematically stifled and suppressed the outrage and resistance of university workers over the past year, and for years before that.

"The stand taken by the Volvo workers is providing a decisive lead and inspiration to workers around the globe in the fight against the attacks being mounted by the capitalist class and its trade union collaborators. We urge workers everywhere to back the Volvo strikers."

Several educators, supporters of the CFPE, have sent statements backing the Volvo workers and endorsing the resolution.

Chris Gordon, a university lecturer, said:

"I stand in support of the Volvo workers in Virginia. Their fight is not just against one company—large as that is. What stands behind the company is the entire corporate structure, including the media, with the government, and in particular the UAW union which supposedly represents them.

"The UAW, with hundreds of thousands of members, refuses to mobilise a movement in defence of workers. The reason is that the UAW does not stand in defence of the workers, but defends and carries out the program of the corporation. Financially, the UAW depends on the stock market and so supports the productivity and cost cutting measures of Volvo.

"There are parallels with a strike in Sydney, Australia, with General Mills workers facing plans for a sellout by 'their' union, the United Workers Union, who, like the UAW, are refusing to mobilise their 150,000 members, and are also not providing full strike pay. The same process of shutting down any unification of workers occurs in every union, including in the area I work in, education.

"I urge auto workers from Volvo, and more broadly, to join the Volvo Workers Rank-and-File Committee, as part of establishing a broader struggle, and developing a movement that will address the root cause of the brutalisation of workers: the capitalist system itself."

Dr Ludmilla Robinson, a senior lecturer in law, stated:

"It is imperative that we all express our support for the 3,000 US Volvo Truck workers who are both determined and brave enough to resist the United Auto

Workers' blatant and cowardly compliance with the demands of Volvo. The UAW's conduct appears to be another example of the egregious infiltration of labour organisations by those whose personal interests and sympathies lie, not with their members, but with the transnational corporations and the exploitative capitalist system.

"In a country in which once strong and effective unions have become the doormats of capitalism, it is so very heartening to learn that there are still those gallant souls who, at a grass-roots level, are willing to fight and serve as an example of what 'true belief' in the ideals of socialism should be.

"Workingmen [and women] of all countries unite!"

A senior lecturer in business studies said:

"I would like to express my solidarity with the Volvo workers, striking at the Volvo Truck New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia.

"I applaud their decision to reject the agreement proposed by the United Auto Workers union and perhaps more important, to form a rank-and-file committee. This brave move pits them against both the company and the union, but they should not think that they are alone. I hope that workers across the globe recognise their inspirational courage and support their fight.

"I would like to state my agreement with the resolution adopted by the supporters of the Committee for Public Education."



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